

## Blu-Ray Review: Gwyneth Paltrow's 'Country Strong' Plays a Forgettable Melody

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 20, 2011 - 12:01pm

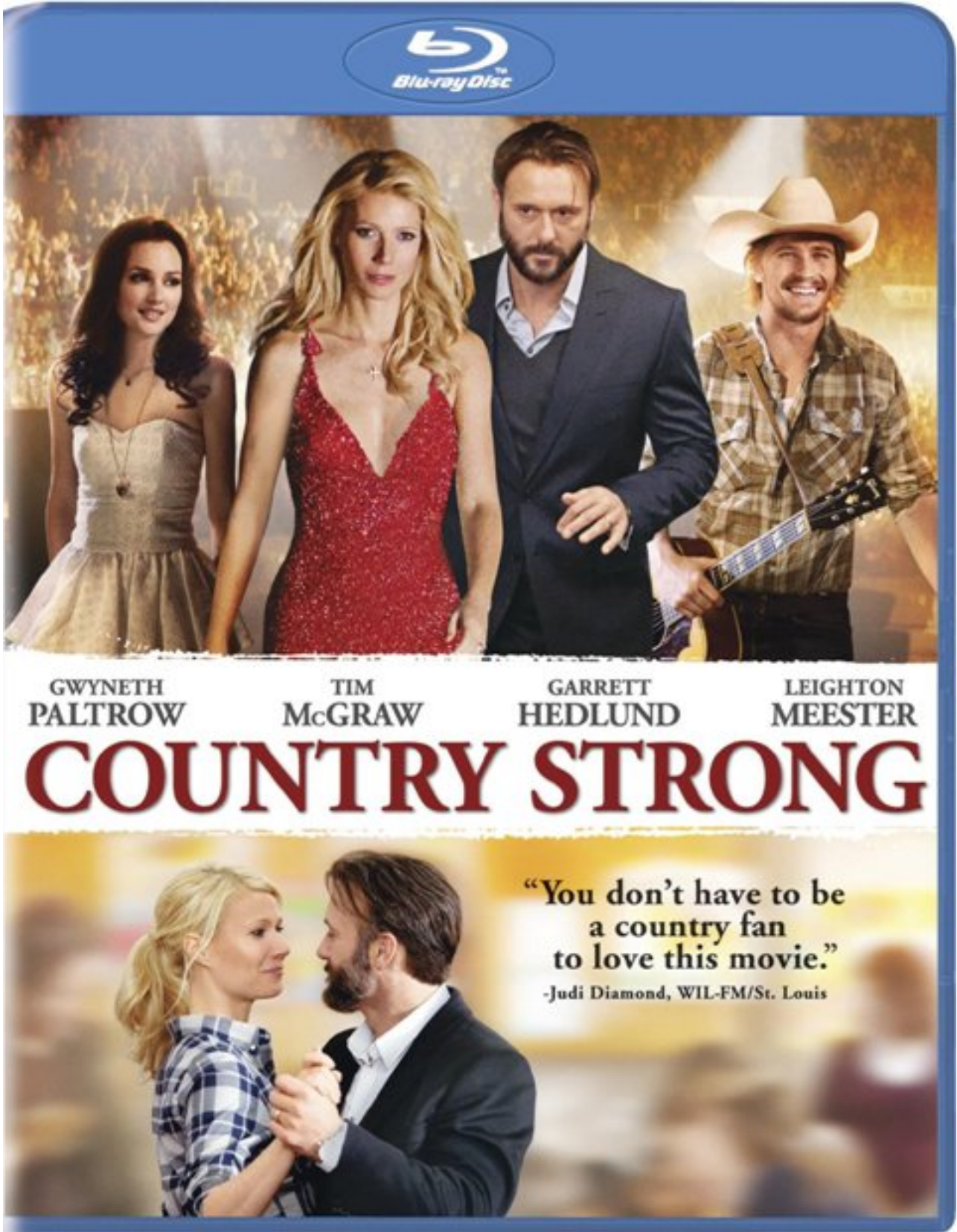
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CHICAGO – Gwyneth Paltrow was EVERYWHERE promoting “Country Strong” and her return to the spotlight. She reached overexposure with appearances on “Glee,” The Grammys, and “Saturday Night Live,” and culminated it all with a performance of the film’s Oscar-nominated song on the Academy Awards. Lost in all of this was the actual movie. Was it any good? Now you can decide for yourself as it was recently released on Blu-ray and DVD.



Blu-Ray Rating: **2.0/5.0**

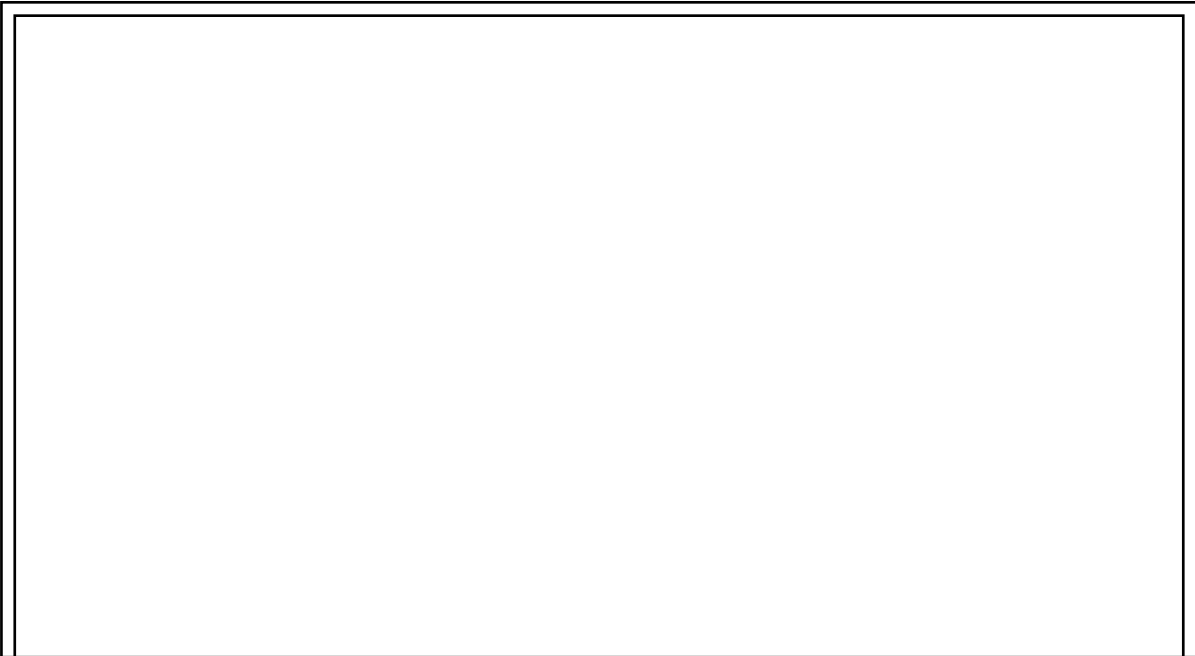
Shana Feste (who delivered the much-stronger melodrama “The Greatest” early last year) wrote and directed “Country Strong,” a piece about four country music stars, two rising and two falling, and the trouble they get into on the way. The up-and-coming Garrett Hedlund (“Tron: Legacy,” “Friday Night Lights”) stars as Beau Hutton, a talented guy trying to make it in small bars in the Bible Belt. He meets and sparks with the legendary Kelly Canter (Gwyneth Paltrow), a recovering alcoholic unsure if she can find fame again through her personal problems. Kelly has a manager/husband named James (Tim McGraw) who pairs Beau with the beautiful-but-nervous Chiles Stanton (Leighton Meester) to open for his wife’s comeback tour. Melodrama ensues.



Country Strong was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on April 12th, 2011  
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Video

“Country Strong” is filled with the kind of cliches that would make even a country song writer roll their eyes. We’ve seen these characters before. Paltrow and McGraw do strong work here — Feste seems to be a better director with actors than she is a writer — but it’s in service of cliché on top of cliché on top of stereotype. This is TV movie writing that never feels more than melodramatic and it drags and drags at nearly two hours.

Films about musicians face two crucial hurdles — the songwriting needs to be impressive and we need to believe that the people involved are real, struggling performers not just actors pretending to be so. “Country Strong” falters in both departments. Remember the quality of the music in 2009’s “Crazy Heart” and, of course, the Oscar-winning performance by Jeff Bridges? Not only does the music in “Country Strong” pale in comparison but it’s just never once believable that these people are actual country musicians. They’re playing the soap opera of country music instead of the realism. It feels more like a music video; like people playing pretend while they lip-sync instead of singing from their heart.







Country Strong was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on April 12th, 2011

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Video*

Despite Paltrow's notable efforts, "Country Strong" pretty much bombed, opening in 6th place and barely making more than \$20 million. Audiences could sense the melodrama and if there's one audience you don't want to try and deliver something false to it's the proudly-down-to-earth and genuine country music fans. Hopefully, the next time the talented Paltrow puts this much heart and publicity behind a project it will be to support something more worthwhile.

#### Special Features:

- o Original Ending
- o Deleted Scenes
- o "Shake That Thing" Extended Performance with Gwyneth Paltrow
- o "Country Strong" Music Video Featuring Gwyneth Paltrow
- o "A Little Bit Stronger" Music Video by Sara Evans
- o Friends In High Places: The Cast Of Country Strong
- o Putting Words Into Their Mouths: The Songwriters
- o A Little Bit Country: The Costumes
- o MovieIQ+Sync Featuring the Country Song Playlist

*"Country Strong" stars Gwyneth Paltrow, Garrett Hedlund, Tim McGraw, and Leighton Meester. It was written and directed by Shana Feste. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD by Sony on April 12th, 2011. It is rated PG-13 and runs 117 minutes.*



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